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Title: Another Day [1]

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Very few men get the chance to look into the eyes of madness. For me it has become an almost daily chore. It's not something I enjoy doing but I do what I must. Being a tinker has never been an easy job, and you can meet some very interesting, and sometime dangerous, people in this profession. I've been working in this damn underground facilities for nearly two months now. And although I know that my work will be used for some evil means, the payment that I receive from Skara Brae Trammel is taking wonderful care of my wife and three children. The things that we are putting together are mammoth in their size. Two have already been finished up and are just sitting there for now. Another one is very near completion and the last is almost half way. I can't say anything really good about the others that work here. Most are natives of Skara Brae, and are a very gloomy bunch. I've never seen one of them laugh or even let loose a smile. They rarely even talk amongst themselves. But then they probably find me a bit weird.

Today started like a normal work day. I went

down into the facilities and began directing construction on the things. I'm not sure what they are or what they will be used for, but I do know that it's going to take a huge amount of magic for each in order to active them. That is if we can ever finish the damn things.

About halfway into the day my employer entered with two of his bodyguards. The lich named Rune Artisem wasn't as terrible to deal with as the many rumors that floated around about him. He was a fairly quiet man, and paid me a very generous weekly sum of gold. But even the gold did not ever make me comfortable being around him. He was still a nasty fellow. I'm not too fond of his two guards either. One of them is a girl, and I believe her name is Vailanna. She only speaks when Artisem might ask her a question, and looks pretty darn sad all of the time. Poor child reminds me of my oldest in a way... The other guard was the worst of the bunch. Not sure of his name at all, I just know he was a bad one. The armor he wore was as dark as the night, and his face wasn't human... I hated being here anytime this one was around.

Artisem approached me like he normally did. I already knew what he was going to ask.

"Well, Grom? How goes the production today?" he asked in a very timid

manner.

"It goes well, mi'lord. We are making good progress on this one today. We should have it finished in at least a week. The other one might take another month or so." I answered.

"You have three days to complete the both of them," he said.

I dropped my hammer as I was quite surprised at what he had just said. This man was not the sort to make jokes at all so I knew that he was serious. But his request was impossible!

"Mi'lord... I understand you need these completed soon for your work and all... But three days to complete both of them? That's impossible... Why to even finish the third one in three days would push all of the workers to exhaustion and even death.." I said.

He then grabbed me by the neck and lifted me into the air. For a dead man he is rather quick.

"Listen to me you petty excuse of a tinker... You will complete these devices within the next three days or I shall put you, and all of these workers, on spears! We no longer can afford to wait! I need these devices to be completed within the next few days!" he shouted as he tightened the gripe around my neck.

He then tossed me towards the wall. By

luck's chance I wasn't  
that badly hurt. But  
something was very wrong  
here... He had never  
acted like this before.  
His attitude had always  
been along the lines of  
taking our time to put  
the best care in creating  
these things... But now it  
seemed as if he needed  
them soon... Almost as if  
he needed them to  
somehow survive...

I got back up on my feet  
and turned to look at  
him. The bright yellow  
glows that were his eyes  
beamed me over. Both of  
his guards had their  
swords drawn as if they  
were about to attack  
something..

"Urm... Well, yes mi'lord...  
I'll push the workers and  
we'll have them completed  
within the three days.." I  
told him in a lie.

"Then make it so... I  
would hate to see  
anything bad happen to  
you or your girls..." he  
replied.

Now this wasn't good.  
Bastard was threatening  
my children... And from  
what I've heard I don't  
put anything past him.  
One story was horrible in  
which he and his people  
butchered a small girl and  
then returned her in  
pieces to her father.

I had to get out of  
here...

Artisem then began to  
walk about and look over  
everything. He came to  
one of the workers and  
stood over the man for  
a few moments.

"Grom!" he screamed.

"Yes, mi'lord?" I said as I ran towards him.

"This one here is working too slow... I suggest you get him to work faster at once..." he said coldly.

"But mi'lord Artisem... This man has been work here for the last twelve hours... He should be going home soon to get some rest..."

The poor worker looked up from his work at me, and I saw what I guess was a look of thankfulness.

Of course Artisem did not share the worker's feelings for my words.

"If you cannot get them to work as they should then perhaps I need to find ways to encourage their work... Vailanna! Behead this man!" he said and pointed towards the worker.

The girl walked up with her sword drawn. Her face was still filled with the sadness that seemed to engulf her. She raised her sword over the worker and then it fell. Not through the worker's neck though, but directly from out of her hand and unto the ground.

"I... I... I cannot..." she said quietly.

Artisem was quick once again. He backhanded the poor girl across the face twice. She didn't scream or cry. She just kept that same look of sadness on her face.

"You worthless dog! This is not the time or the place that your lack of control is needed! He is upon me and we must act or all my work will be for naught! I should listen to the advice of the Lady and put you in a grave..." said Artisem to his Vailanna.

"At least there I would find my peace and be free of your madness..." she answered him.

And once again I watched as Artisem backhanded her.

"I promise you Vailanna... If you somehow cost me my powers to him... You will suffer an eternal death... Now pick up that sword and await me in the Town Hall... It seems I shall have to place even more magic into your stupid head." He said in a cold, yet somehow scared, voice.

Vailanna picked up her sword and then left. Artisem then motioned to his other guard, and this one was quick to behead the poor worker. The head rolled off a bit and came to Artisem's feet. His foot came crashing through it, and the bits and pieces splattered about the area...

The lich then continued to look about and inspect both the workers and their work. Thankfully he didn't have any more of them beheaded. But something was wrong here... He was scared of something...or someone... I realized this in his

squabble with Vailanna as he mentioned a "he" twice... Artisem was one of the most powerful creatures in the realm when it came to Necromancy and the Dark Arts. Only a small handful could claim and prove power over him. But those beings were known to be allies and friends of his... It had me think because why would a dead man, who is very protective of all aspects of his "life", be terrified of someone... I wanted to ask him if something was about, but curiosity has killed the cat too many times. If anything would happen then I'm sure I would find out.

He approached me again and said "Remember Grom... You have three days... Do not disappoint me..."

"I'll do my best not to, mi'lord..." I answered him.

"I suggest doing better than your best..." he said and then turned to his guard. "Verimos... Let us be off... We must tend to this annoying Vailanna issue once again, and then we shall call together all members of the Society... I will not allow him to stop me... Not when we are so close..."

\*continued in volume two\*